



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Bend National Park
Rio Grande Wild & Scenic River

Big Bend National Park
PO Box 129
Big Bend National Park, TX

432 477-2251 phone
432 477-1175 fax

News Release Digest 2005

• Park Plans a prescribed fire operation	January 24, 2005
• Park reinstates temporary closures for peregrine falcons	January 31, 2005
• Park seeks comments on Panther Junction VC Expansion	February 28, 2005
• 2005 superintendent's compendium available for review	March 7, 2005
• Remains found believed to be those of missing hiker in Park	March 28, 2005
• Park to host a gateway community workshop	April 18, 2005
• Superintendent's order to prohibit smoking in the High Chisos Mountains	May 9, 2005
• Public invited to comment on fire planning process	May 27, 2005
• Gateway Gala gathering set for July 16	July 1, 2005
• Park seeks comments on Panther Junction VC Expansion	July 15, 2005
• Park Plans a prescribed fire operation	November 21, 2005
• Park announces entrance fee rate change for 2006	December 19, 2005
• Fatality at Big Bend National Park	December 19, 2005



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Bend National Park
P.O. Box 129
Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 24, 2005

For More Information Contact:
David Elkowitz (432) 477-1108

Big Bend National Park News Release

Big Bend National Park Plans a Prescribed Fire Operation

Prescribed fire operations are scheduled to start February 7, 2005, if environmental factors such as wind, temperature, relative humidity, and fuel moisture levels are favorable. Firefighters plan operations to last up to a week's timeframe, including initial preparations and the actual burn. The area to be burned is a 530-acre plot east and south of the Basin and main east/west park road junction.

The burn is designed to reduce the fuel loading alongside and near the road which provides the access to the Chisos Basin. In addition, prescribed fire is one of the most effective tools available to resource managers for restoring and maintaining fire dependant ecosystems. Prescribed fires are based on burn plans that must be approved by the Park Superintendent before any of the recommended actions are implemented. Park fire managers plan the prescribed burns in consultation with resource managers, and all prescribed fires are managed with firefighter and public safety as the first priority.

Thorough planning is used to minimize smoke and road access delays; however, it is impossible to predict weather patterns and smoke behavior with complete accuracy. Smoke impacts or delays may be possible along the adjacent roadways. No park closures are anticipated at this time.

--END--

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Bend National Park
P.O. Box 129
Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 31, 2005

David Elkowitz
432-477-1108

Big Bend National Park News Release

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK REINSTATES TEMPORARY CLOSURES FOR PEREGRINE FALCONS

In August 1999, the Peregrine falcon was removed from the federal endangered species list, a move prompted by the falcon's comeback from the brink of extinction. There remains however, cause for concern. The Peregrine is still classified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a *Species of Special Concern*. Throughout Texas there are less than one dozen known nesting pairs and the falcon remains on the state's endangered species list.

The federal Endangered Species Act requires that Peregrine populations continue to be monitored for a minimum of five years after the date of delisting. National Park Service policies require the protection and preservation of all state-listed species and all species of concern, regardless of federal or state classification. In keeping with this mandate, and to provide the nesting falcons with areas free of human disturbance, Big Bend National Park will again temporarily close or place restrictions on the use of certain park lands.

The areas closed to public entry from February 1 through May 31 are:

- The Southeast Rim Trail and a portion of the Northeast Rim Trail from the Boot Canyon/Southeast Rim junction to a point just north of Campsite NE-4.
- All Southeast Rim campsites as well as Northeast (NE) campsites 4 and 5 are closed during this period.

Technical rock climbing on rock faces within ¼ mile of known peregrine eyries, as posted, will not be allowed between February 1 and July 15.

The park does not plan to close any other areas but restrictions may be modified if Peregrine behavior or nesting sites do not follow traditional trends.

--MORE--

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Through the efforts of federal, state and private agencies, the Peregrine has staged a remarkable comeback since it was placed on the federal list in 1970. Superintendent John H. King remarked, "In spite of the success of the falcons over their entire range, there is still concern for certain small populations, including the falcons that nest in Big Bend National Park and along the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River.

"The success of the Peregrine falcon recovery has been encouraging to all of us who have followed their plight, but they aren't out of danger yet—the Big Bend population still needs attention and protection. We will take all necessary steps to ensure their continued existence," said Superintendent King.

-END-



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Bend National Park
P.O. Box 129
Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 28, 2005

David Elkowitz
432-477-1108

Big Bend National Park News Release

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK SEEKS COMMENTS ON PANTHER JUNCTION VISITOR CENTER EXPANSION

Big Bend National Park proposes to expand the Panther Junction Visitor Center to accommodate present-day visitor demands. The expansion is intended to create additional bookstore, desk, and exhibit space that will allow us to better serve park visitors.

The Panther Junction Visitor Center was constructed in the 1950s and is no longer adequate, because visitation to the park has increased and the current bookstore is unable to accommodate the increased amount of literature that has been published on the Big Bend region. During peak winter months, holidays, and the weeks of spring break the visitor center is crowded to the point that visitor service is hampered by crowds, traffic flow, inadequate desk space, and grossly inadequate bookstore floor space.

This proposal would increase the existing visitor center from 1110 square feet to approximately 1740 square feet, a 57% increase. The expansion would occur on the eastern side of the building, in the location of the current handicap-accessible exterior restroom facilities. The expansion would be constructed in a style compatible with the current architectural style of the building. The expansion would require reconstructing the existing integral public restrooms, which would be made handicap-accessible and would be equipped with modern, efficient fixtures. Two new heating/cooling systems would replace the existing single original system, allowing for separate temperature control of the public and administrative spaces served by the existing system. New bookstore storage would be built behind the expanded public space, to replace and augment the existing bookstore storage space.

The National Park Service considers the Panther Junction Headquarters Building to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places because it was designed by a renowned architect. However, the building has not been formally determined eligible through consultation with the Texas State Historic Preservation Office, an action that would occur via the environmental assessment process.

An Environmental Assessment for the visitor center expansion will be prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to provide the decision-making framework that 1) analyzes a reasonable range of alternatives to meet project objectives, 2) evaluates potential issues and impacts to park resources and values, and 3) identifies mitigation measures to lessen the degree or extent of these impacts.

The National Park Service encourages public participation throughout the Environmental Assessment process. The National Park Service is currently in the scoping phase of this project, and invites you to submit your written comments to the address below. Following receipt of these comments, an Environmental Assessment will be prepared, at which time the public will be provided another opportunity to comment on the project. Please provide all comments by March 24, 2005 to:

Superintendent
P.O. Box 129
Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

--END--

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Bend National Park
P.O. Box 129
Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 7, 2005

David Elkowitz
432-477-1108

Big Bend National Park News Release

2005 BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK SUPERINTENDENT'S COMPENDIUM **AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW**

The Superintendent's Compendium is a supplemental document that addresses specific management needs and concerns of an individual national park area. The Big Bend National Park and Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River 2005 Superintendent's Compendium is now available for public review. The compendium is authorized by Title 16, United States Code, Section 3, and Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 1 through 7; these regulations are established by the Park Superintendent. The Superintendent's Compendium is revised annually to continually address specific management needs of the park. These regulations apply in addition to the criminal laws of the United States and the regulations contained in Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

Copies of the 2005 Compendium can be obtained at Panther Junction Visitor Center at Big Bend National Park or by writing to the address below and asking for a review copy.

Superintendent
P.O. Box 129
Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

Big Bend National Park and the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River are jointly managed and as such the Park Superintendent is responsible for preserving and managing the two parks and their resources for the enjoyment and continued use of current and future generations.

--END--

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Bend National Park
P.O. Box 129
Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 28, 2005

David Elkowitz
432-477-1108

Big Bend National Park News Release

REMAINS FOUND BELIEVED TO BE THOSE OF MISSING HIKER AT BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK

On March 24, 2005, visitors hiking in the Mule Ears found a muddy backpack and brought it out to rangers. Rangers returned to the site with the hikers, because the area was the focus of an extensive search in June, 2004, for Peter Bastien of Dallas. Rangers later in the day located the skeletal remains, clothing, and identification of Bastien. The family has been notified of the tentative identification pending the results of dental record examination.

On June 3, 2004, patrol rangers noted a Ford Taurus parked at the Mule Ears parking lot. Overnight backpackers routinely use this area for extended hikes and thus on June 7, 2004, when the vehicle was still in place, an investigation and lengthy search was begun.

The investigation revealed the vehicle owner to be 37-year- old Peter Bastien. Search operations were expanded several days to include ground search teams, helicopters from Marfa Border patrol and the Department of Public Safety from Midland, the park's own aircraft, horses, and tracking dogs. The operation was managed under the incident command system.

As of June 14, 2004, all likely areas, clues, and leads had been followed as far as possible without success. The search effort is continued in a limited extended capacity with ground searchers having searched approximately 5,600 acres, and 33,000 acres searched by air.

"The discovery of the remains believed to be Mr. Bastien after a long and exhaustive search effort will hopefully allow the friends and family of Mr. Bastien to find closure, as it will for park staff who committed their time to the search effort," said Superintendent John H. King.

--END--



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Bend National Park
P.O. Box 129
Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 18, 2005

David Elkowitz
432-477-1101

**BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK TO HOST
A GATEWAY COMMUNITY WORKSHOP**

On April 27, 2005, Big Bend National Park will host a Gateway Community workshop, open to all interested Marathon community members, to promote cooperation and dialogue between the park and its local "gateway" neighbors. The workshop will begin at 9:00 AM and conclude at 3:00 PM with a break for lunch. The workshop will be held at the Ritchie Building and will include small group exercises and large group discussions. Light refreshments will be provided.

Superintendent John H. King sees the workshop as an opportunity to work in partnership with community members to identify and work together to address issues of mutual concern. "We hope this workshop will provide a forum for open, positive dialogue with our neighbors. We want to build on our relationships, nurture existing partnerships and create new ones, and together explore ways that the park can interface with our local communities to work toward common goals."

The April workshop will focus on the Marathon community. An earlier workshop was held with the Study Butte/Terlingua/Lajitas communities. In the future, Superintendent King hopes to expand outreach efforts to other gateway communities, such as Alpine, by hosting similar workshops. "This is the second of what we hope will be many such gatherings. We are committed to long-term cooperation with our neighbors."

For more information contact Big Bend National Park Management Assistant Lou Good at 432-477-1101.

--END--

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Bend National Park
P.O. Box 129
Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 9, 2005

For More Information Contact:
David Elkowitz (432) 477-1108

Big Bend National Park News Release

SUPERINTENDENT'S ORDER

TEMPORARY CLOSURE

In accordance with authorities granted in Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations, sections 1.5(a) and 1.5(a) (1), I order the temporary closure of the high Chisos area to smoking.

The closure is effective immediately and will last an indefinite period. The Big Bend area is experiencing an extended period of dry conditions elevating the fire danger to extreme levels. This action is being taken to prevent accidental fire ignitions during this period of extreme fire danger. Park personnel will continue to monitor conditions. The closure will be lifted when fire danger levels have decreased.

--END--

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Bend National Park
P.O. Box 129
Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 27, 2005

David Elkowitz
432-477-1108

Big Bend National Park News Release

Public Invited to Comment on Big Bend National Park Fire Planning Process

The National Park Service is updating the management plan that currently guides actions related to fire management at Big Bend National Park, and public input is being sought at this time.

The fire planning process includes writing an Environmental Assessment (EA) that thoroughly evaluates options available to manage fire. Park staff has developed a range of options to manage fire including combinations of fire suppression, prescribed fire, mechanical fuel reduction and wildland fire use for resource benefit. These options are presented in the Environmental Assessment (EA), which is available on the park's website www.nps.gov/bibe/parkbasics/press.htm, at Panther Junction main headquarters, or by calling the park at 432-477-1188.

Since European settlement and dedication of the park, fires have been actively suppressed resulting in a build-up of fuels and changes in plant communities. Fire had previously been a natural part of maintaining Chihuahuan Desert ecosystems. When properly managed, fire facilitates nutrient cycling, helps restore shrub-invaded grasslands, enhances and maintains biological diversity, and protects developed sites and cultural resources. The gradual reintroduction of fire through prescribed burning is proposed as a way to move ecosystems towards historical fire regimes. These carefully monitored fires can reduce the risk of high-intensity fires associated with fuel build-ups and act as fire breaks in the event of naturally occurring wildland fire.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) directs the National Park Service to consider the environmental consequences of this project and to prepare an EA. The National Park Service is required to elicit comments from interested agencies and organizations, as well as the general public.

All interested parties are encouraged to submit comments containing the following information:

1. Name, address, and telephone number.
2. Title of project you are commenting on: Fire Management Plan EA at Big Bend National Park
3. Specific facts, comments and supporting information that you believe should be considered by the National Park Service regarding this proposal.

This environmental assessment will be on public review for 30 days. The comment period is June 1 – June 30, 2005. Please note that the names and addresses of those who comment become part of the public record. **If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment.** We will make all submissions from organizations, businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses available for public inspection in their entirety.

Comments should be submitted by June 30, 2005 to:

Superintendent
P.O. Box 129
Big Bend National Park, Texas 79834

Thank you for your interest in Big Bend National Park.

--END--

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Bend National Park
P.O. Box 129
Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 1, 2005

David Elkowitz
432-477-1108

Big Bend National Park News Release

GATEWAY GALA GATHERING SET FOR JULY 16

Big Bend National Park is pleased to host the First Annual Gateway Gala Gathering on Saturday, July 16, in the cool mountain air of the Chisos Basin. The event, a celebration of summer for park neighbors and local community members, will feature music, food, and crafts from 12:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. All activities will take place in the parking lot behind the Chisos Basin Visitor Center.

The Big Bend Natural History Association will sponsor the day's musical entertainment. On the stage from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. will be *Laird and the Creatures*, featuring local artists Laird Considine, Joe Sirotnak, Shanna Cowell, and Ron Steiman, all veterans of the Terlingua music scene.

Vendors will offer hamburgers, hot dogs, BBQ, Mexican food, and roasted corn as well as sodas and beer. The vendors include the park's concessionaire Forever Resorts, Padilla's roasted corn from Fort Stockton, and Poco Mexico of Fort Davis.

Park Superintendent John H. King invites all to "please join us in celebrating your park, your neighbors, and the summer season in Big Bend on July 16. We hope to see many of our park neighbors enjoying the great entertainment, local crafts, and good food."

King also designated July 16 as a fee free day. Free entrance passes will be issued at Persimmon Gap, Panther Junction and the Chisos Basin Visitor Center and will be valid for up to seven days.

For more information, please call (432) 477-1108.

--END--



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Bend National Park
P.O. Box 129
Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 1, 2005

David Elkowitz
432-477-1108

Big Bend National Park News Release

GATEWAY GALA GATHERING SET FOR JULY 16

Big Bend National Park is pleased to host the First Annual Gateway Gala Gathering on Saturday, July 16, in the cool mountain air of the Chisos Basin. The event, a celebration of summer for park neighbors and local community members, will feature music, food, and crafts from 12:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. All activities will take place in the parking lot behind the Chisos Basin Visitor Center.

The Big Bend Natural History Association will sponsor the day's musical entertainment. On the stage from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. will be *Laird and the Creatures*, featuring local artists Laird Considine, Joe Sirotnak, Shanna Cowell, and Ron Steiman, all veterans of the Terlingua music scene.

Vendors will offer hamburgers, hot dogs, BBQ, Mexican food, and roasted corn as well as sodas and beer. The vendors include the park's concessionaire Forever Resorts, Padilla's roasted corn from Fort Stockton, and Poco Mexico of Fort Davis.

Park Superintendent John H. King invites all to "please join us in celebrating your park, your neighbors, and the summer season in Big Bend on July 16. We hope to see many of our park neighbors enjoying the great entertainment, local crafts, and good food."

King also designated July 16 as a fee free day. Free entrance passes will be issued at Persimmon Gap, Panther Junction and the Chisos Basin Visitor Center and will be valid for up to seven days.

For more information, please call (432) 477-1108.

--END--



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Bend National Park
P.O. Box 129
Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 15, 2005

David Elkowitz
432-477-1108

Big Bend National Park News Release

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK SEEKS COMMENTS ON PANTHER JUNCTION VISITOR CENTER EXPANSION

Big Bend National Park proposes to expand a portion of the Panther Junction Visitor Center, to more efficiently serve the needs of visitors and staff. The visitor center, which contains offices for park interpreters, a sales area for the park cooperating association, and park orientation exhibits, occupies a Mission 66 period building that is considered eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The visitor desk and sales area used by Big Bend Natural History Association has become crowded because of the increased volume and variety of items found popular with park visitors. A portion of the existing northeast wall of the visitor center would be removed and an additional 1,110 square feet of total floor space would be constructed on the northeast side of the visitor center—approximately 850 square feet which will be public space, and approximately 260 square feet which will be for storage and climate control equipment. Approximately 110 square feet of mechanical and storage space in the existing building will be reconfigured as public space. The existing handicap accessible restroom facility built in the 1990s and located east of the main building would be demolished. The existing integral public toilets will be reconfigured to accommodate handicap accessibility and low flow fixtures, and will increase from approximately 300 square feet to approximately 360 square feet by incorporating some existing administrative and bookstore storage space that was originally an office toilet.

This proposal would increase the total public space in the visitor center from 1110 square feet to approximately 2070 square feet, an 86% increase. The expansion would be constructed in a style compatible with the current architectural style of the building.

The National Park Service considers the Panther Junction Headquarters Building to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places because it was designed by a renowned architect, Cecil Doty. However, the building has not been formally determined eligible through consultation with the Texas State Historic Preservation Office, an action that would occur via the environmental assessment process.

The National Park Service invites you to submit your written comments on the EA to the address below. A copy of the EA can be obtained by writing to the address below. The document can also be viewed at the following website: <http://www.nps.gov/bibe/home.htm>. The comment period is open from July 15 - August 15, 2005. If you wish to comment on the EA you may mail comments to the name and address below no later than August 15, 2005. Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. **If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment.** We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.

Please Address Comments to:

Superintendent
Big Bend National Park
P.O. Box 129
Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

--END--

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Bend National Park
P.O. Box 129
Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 21, 2005

For More Information Contact:
David Elkowitz (432) 477-1108

Big Bend National Park News Release

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK PLANS A PRESCRIBED FIRE OPERATION

Prescribed fire operations are scheduled to start November 28, 2005, if environmental factors such as wind, temperature, relative humidity, and fuel moisture levels are favorable. The prescribed fire is planned to last up to two weeks, including initial preparations and the actual burn. The area to be burned is a 343-acre plot along the South Rim of the high Chisos Mountains and down slope into Boot Canyon.

The burn is designed to reduce the fuel loading in the forest, to study the fire effects, and to use prescribed fire to mimic natural-occurring, low-intensity fire events. In addition, prescribed fire is one of the most effective tools available to resource managers for restoring and maintaining fire-dependant ecosystems. Prescribed fires are based on burn plans that must be approved by the park Superintendent before any of the recommended actions are implemented. Park fire managers plan the prescribed burns in consultation with resource managers, and all prescribed fires are managed with firefighter and public safety as the first priority.

Thorough planning is used to minimize smoke and visitor closures; however, it is impossible to predict weather patterns and smoke behavior with complete accuracy. Smoke impacts or delays may be possible along the adjacent trails. Campsite and trail closures will include Colima 1, Boot Canyon 1-4, Juniper Canyon 1, Northeast 1-5 and Southeast 1-4. These closures will be minimized to the shortest time possible.

--END--

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Bend National Park
P.O. Box 129
Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 19, 2005

For More Information Contact:
David Elkowitz (432) 477-1108

Big Bend National Park News Release

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK ANNOUNCES ENTRANCE FEE RATE CHANGE FOR 2006

On January 1, 2006, Big Bend National Park will begin charging visitors who are 16 years of age and older, in accordance with the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (Public Law 108-447) signed on December 8, 2004, by President George W. Bush.

This Act created a multi-agency fee authority for the National Park Service and four other Federal land agencies, allowing them to retain or continue to retain the majority of the fee revenues collected at the site to be used for improvements related to visitor use and enjoyment. Previous to this legislation, persons 16 years of age and younger were not charged an entrance fee.

All other fee rates at Big Bend National Park will remain the same as in 2005. For a complete listing of fee rates, please visit the park's website at www.nps.gov/bibe.

--END--



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Bend National Park
P.O. Box 129
Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 19, 2005

David Elkowitz
432-477-1108

Big Bend National Park News Release

FATALITY AT BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK

Steven Smith, Jr., 20, from Round Rock, Texas, died when he was thrown from a motorcycle on the Old Ore Road in Big Bend National Park. Steven Smith Jr. was riding with a group of friends on the secondary dirt road when he lost control of the motorcycle and was thrown off. Smith was wearing a helmet and other protective equipment. Witnesses stated he lost consciousness at the scene and remained unresponsive. Park Rangers arrived and provided medical attention. Life support helicopters were dispatched from Midland and San Angelo Texas, but were unable to reach the park due to weather conditions en route. Smith was pronounced dead while en route to Alpine in the park's ambulance. The incident occurred on Saturday, December 17.

"We are truly saddened by this tragic death," stated Superintendent John H. King, "and offer our condolences to the Smith family and friends."

--END--